

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 02195 150345Z

21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 NSCE-00 /081 W

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R 150230Z NOV 75

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4753

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONGEN HONG KONG

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 2195

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR NK CH AS

SUBJ: DPRK-AUSTRIALIA RELATIONS

REF: SEOUL 8407 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. THIS MESSAGE DISCUSSES SOME ASPECTS OF RECENT EVENTS IN DPRKA-GOA RELATIONS AS SEEN PRINCIPALLY BY AUSTRALIAN EMBOFFS IN PEKING. THESE OFFICERS DO NOT ACCEPT CHARGE THAT AUSTRALIA CHANGED UN VOTE AS DIRECT RESULT OF KOREAN THREAT. THEY REMAIN RUEFUL ABOUT WHAT LAST FORTNIGHT'S ACTIONS HAVE REVEALED BOTH ABOUT NORTH KOREA AND ABOUT THE BASIS OF DPRK-GOA RELATIONS.

ACTION REQUESTED: WE HAVE NOT SEEN CANBERRA ANALYSIS OF THESE EVENTS AND WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING PERTINENT TELEGRAMS. END SUMMARY

1. AS THEY LOOK BACK UPON THEIR SEVERELY SPRAINED, ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY NOT CLEANLY FRACTURED, RELATIONSHIP WITH NORTH KOREA, AUSTRALIANS HERE HAVE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PEKING 02195 150345Z

TIONSHIP WITH NORTH KOREA, AUSTRALIANS HERE HAVE

SEEMED IN OUR TALKS WITH THEM OVER PAST WEEK STILL
PUZZLED AND SOMEWHAT RUEFUL ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP.

2. AUSTRALIANS HERE ARE NOT ACCEPTING INTERPRETATION
THAT AUSTRALIAN ABSTENTION ON HOSTILE RESOLUTION WAS
RESULT OF NORTH KOREAN THREAT. THEIR BASIC POSITION--
POSSIBLY REFLECTING INSTRUCTIONS FROM CANBERRA--IS THAT
MOVE FROM ANNOUNCED OPPOSITION TO ABSTENTION WAS
BROUGHT ABOUT MORE BY SHIFTS ON PART OF ASEAN'S WITH
WHOM AUSTRALIANS ATTEMPTING TO CONCERT AND BY AUSTRALIAN
RECONSIDERATION OF WIDER ISSUES INVOLVED IN TWO
RESOLUTIONS. ONE SENIOR AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY STAFFER
MAINTAINS THAT TIMING OF SHIFT IN VOTE MAKES IT ENTIRELY
CREDIBLE THAT CHANGE-- DICTATED BY THE PRIME MINISTER--
WAS NOT BROUGHT ABOUT BY NORTH KOREAN PRESSURE. HE
SAYS THAT AUSTRALIANS IN CANBERRA, NEW YORK, PEKING
AND PYONGYANG AT NO TIME REALLY BELIEVED THAT NORTH
KOREANS WOULD CARRY OUT THEIR THREAT. IT WAS AXIOMATIC,
HE STATES, THAT KOREANS WERE BLUFFING AND THAT IT WAS
IN AUSTRALIAN INTEREST TO CALL THEIR BLUFF. AS HE PUT
IT, AUSTRALIA "COULD CALL NORTH KOREANS'BLUFF BECAUSE
NORTH KOREA WOULDN'T BE SO STUPID AS TO GO AGAINST ITS
OWN INTEREST" BY FORCING AUSTRALIANS OUT OF PYONG-
YANG. COMMENT : QED END COMMENT.

3. IN TRACING NORTH KOREAN POSITION, AUSTRALIANS HERE
POINT TO AMBASSADOR FITZGERALD'S OCT 2 CONVERSATION
WITH HO DAM IN WHICH HO HAD TAKEN RELATIVELY MODERATE
POSITION, INCLUDING IN ANSWERING FITZGERALD THAT
AUSTRALIA'S POSITION ON RESOLUTION WOULD NOT HAVE
DIRECT EFFECT ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO GOVERNMENTS,
WHICH NORTH KOREA VALUED. AT ABOUT SAME TIME, NORTH
KOREAN AMBASSADOR IN PEKING HAD EXPRESSED SIMILARLY
MODERATE POSITION EVEN THOUGH HE, LIKE HIS FOREIGN
MINISTER WITH FITZGERALD, HAD URGED AUSTRALIANS TO
ABSTAIN ON BOTH RESOLUTIONS. KOREAN POSITION SUBSE-
QUENTLY, OF COURSE, HARDENED AGAIN AND MORE EXPLICIT
THREATS COMMENCED. BUT EVEN AFTER NORTH KOREANS
WITHDREW PERSONNEL FROM CANBERRA ON OCT 30, THEIR
ULTIMATE INTENTION STILL WAS UNCLEAR. WITHDRAWAL HAD
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PEKING 02195 150345Z

TAKEN PLACE 12 HOURS BEFORE UN VOTE. AUSTRALIAN CHARGE
IN PYONGYANG WATSON WAS DUE HERE SHORTLY THEREAFTER ON
COURIER RUN AND QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT HE SHOULD
MAKE TRIP WAS REVIEWED. CANBERRA DECIDED AUSTRALIA
SHOULD MAINTAIN "NORMAL" BEHAVIOR AND WATSON, THERE-
FORE, MADE PEKING COURIER TRIP, ARRIVING HERE OCT 31.
HE RETURNED TO PYONGYANG FOUR DAYS LATER, WHERE HE WAS
MET ROUTINELY AND CHEERFULLY AT AIRPORT BY PROTOCOL

DIRECTOR. WATSON LATER IN DAY HAD FRIENDLY CONVERSATION WITH DPRK VICE FOREIGN MINISTER AT PYONGYANG TRADE SHOW. THE AUSTRALIAN NOTE REJECTING THE OCT 30 DPRK STATEMENT WAS DELIVERED LATE IN THE DAY. THE NOTE WAS RETURNED "UNOPENED" THE NEXT DAY.

4. THE AUSTRALIAN NOTE WAS AGAIN PRESENTED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ON MORNING OF NOV 6. AT NOON THE SAME DAY, WATSON WAS CALLED IN BY PROTOCOL DIRECTOR, WHO THEN READ HIM STATEMENT EXPELLING AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND RETURNED THE AUSTRALIAN NOTE. WATSON RESPONDED THAT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY OF THE ACCUSATIONS AND WOULD LIKE FURTHER EXPLANATIONS, WHEREUPON PROTOCOL DIRECTOR ABRUPTLY LEFT THE ROOM, REQUIRING WATSON TO FIND HIS OWN WAY OUT OF FOREIGN MINISTRY BUILDING.

5. FROM THAT POINT UNTIL THEIR DEPARTURE FROM PYONGYANG ON NOV 8, WATSON AND FOUR OTHER STAFFERS CONCERNED ON PACKING BELONGINGS, WITH NORTH KOREANS REFUSING TO LEND THEM ANY ASSISTANCE WHATSOEVER WITH LIFT VANS AND OTHER PROBLEMS.

6. AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY DOES NOT CLAIM TO UNDERSTAND CLEARLY SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR 6-MONTH AND 9-DAY EXPERIENCE IN PYONGYANG. IN THE FIRST PLACE, AUSTRALIANS HERE DO NOT CLAIM TO UNDERSTAND AT ALL WHAT THE COMPLAINTS VOICED IN THE KOREAN NOTES OF OCT 30 AND NOV 6 WERE BASED UPON. THEY DO FEEL IN RETROSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT KOREANS PROBABLY CALCULATED THAT THE ONLY THEY COULD MAINTAIN SEMBLANCE OF DIGNITY AFTER HAVING PULLED KOREAN EMBASSY OUT OF CANBERRA BEFORE ABSTENTION VOTE WAS TO FOLLOW THROUGH
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PAGE 04 PEKING 02195 150345Z

BY FORCING AUSTRALIANS OUT OF PYONGYANG. WITHDRAWAL FROM CANBERRA WOULD OTHERWISE BE TOTALLY UNEXPLAINABLE. THE UNEVENNESS OF THE KOREAN THREATS ABOUT THE UN VOTE AND THE CONFUSING TIME SEQUENCE OF THEIR DECISION ON THE TWO EMBASSIES PROMPTED ONE AUSTRALIAN HERE TO EXPLAIN IT ONLY AS A "CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF KOREAN LOGIC": HAVING ACTED ILLOGICALLY IN THE BEGINNING, THEY HAD TO CONTINUE THIS ILLOGIC THROUGH TO ITS END. AT ANOTHER POINT, AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY OFFICER DREW LESSON THAT THE AUSTRALIANS SIMPLY HAD UNDERESTIMATED THE HARD-HEADEDNESS OF THE KOREANS AND THEIR TOTALLY INFLEXIBLE DETERMINATION TO OBTAIN OTHERS' SUPPORT FOR REUNIFICATION ON THEIR OWN TERMS.

7. AUSTRALIANS HERE STRESS THAT NORTH KOREA SOUGHT

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOA ALMOST WHOLLY TO ENLIST CANBERRA IN PYONGYANG'S CAUSE, GIVING VIRTUALLY NO WEIGHT TO THOSE ASPECTS OF RELATIONSHIP MORE VALUED BY AUSTRALIANS, WHO HAD SOUGHT TO PROVIDE SOME BRIDGE BETWEEN NORTH KOREANS AND OTHER COUNTRIES. AUSTRALIANS HERE SPECULATE ALSO THAT NORTH KOREANS HAD BEEN UNSETTLED AND PUT OFF BY FACT (AS AUSTRALIANS SEE IT) THAT AUSTRALIANS HAD BEEN FIRST OF THOSE WHO HAVE ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA TO HAVE SPOKEN BLUNTLY AND DISAGREED CATEGORICALLY WITH NORTH KOREAN INTERLOCUTORS WHEN OCCASION WARRANTED. THE WHOLE BUSINESS, AS ONE EMBASSY OFFICER PUT IT HERE, DEMONSTRATES THE "LIMITATIONS OF THE NORTH KOREAN POLITICAL MIND." AUSTRALIANS EXPECT THEIR EXPERIENCE MAY GIVE PAUSE TO OTHER COUNTRIES CONTEMPLATING TIES WITH PYONGYANG. THEY MENTIONED IN PARTICULAR MALAYSIA, NEW ZEALAND AND WEST GERMANY.

8. WATSON IS NOW EN ROUTE BACK TO CANBERRA. AS FAR AS AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY HERE UNDERSTANDS, THE QUESTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IS STILL LEFT OPEN. AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PERSONNEL IN PYONGYANG HAVE BEEN EXPELLED ON GROUNDS THAT THEY ARE NO LONGER QUALIFIED TO FUNCTION AND, ACCORDING TO DPRK, QUESTION OF RELATIONS SIMPLY HAS NOT BEEN ADDRESSED DIRECTLY. FOR THE TIME BEING, WE UNDERSTAND GOA IS ADOPTING A WAIT-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 05 PEKING 02195 150345Z

AND-SEE POSITION AND WILL NOT ATTEMPT ANY EARLY ACTION VIS-A-VIS DPRK.
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